REMARKS

Claims 13-19 and 24 are pending in the present application. Independent claims 13 and 24, and claims 14-19 dependent directly or indirectly on claim 13, are directed to a method of producing a polarizing plate.

In the Office Action, claims 13-19 and 24 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as obvious over US 6,746,633 to Sakamaki et al. ("Sakamaki") in view of US 2,445,555 to Binda ("Binda").

It is alleged in the Office Action that the stretch ratio is defined as compared to an original length L0 of the film before any stretching.

The rejection is again respectfully traversed. The interpretation of the term "stretch ratio" in the Office Action is erroneous. Specifically, the present specification distinguishes the terms "stretch ratio" and "total stretch ratios," which makes clear that a "stretch ratio" is the stretch ratio in a particular stretching step, i.e., the ratio of the film length after the stretching step as compared to the film length before the stretching step, whereas the "total stretch ratio" is the ratio of the film length after the last stretching steps as compared to the length before the first stretching step. These are standard definitions for these terms of the art.

Reference is made to the Examples of the present specification. In Example 1, there is a dry stretching step (stretch ratio 3.2), a first wet stretching step (stretch ratio 1.2) and a second wet stretching step (stretch ratio 1.7). It is stated that the total stretch ratio was 6.5. According to the interpretation of the Office Action, the "stretch ratio" in the first wet stretching step would be 3.2x1.2=3.84 and the "stretch ratio" in the second wet stretching step would be 3.2x1.2x1.7=6.5, which is clearly erroneous. On the contrary, according to the standard definition, the final (total) stretch ratios resulting from the multiple stretching steps, as compared to the initial length before

the start of the first stretching step, is 3.2x1.2x1.7=6.5, as stated in Example 1, whereas the "stretch ratios" of the individual stretching steps are 3.2, 1.2, and 1.7, respectively. The same calculations and definitions applies to the other Examples of the present specification.

Turning to Binda, contrary to the interpretation set forth in the Office Action, Binda does not suggest a second stretching step at a higher stretch ratio than the first stretching step. Specifically, Binda states that its re-stretching step is "to as nearly as possible the same degree as in the initial stretching operation" (Binda at col. 2, lines 42-43). The "degree" of the first stretching is defined as "six or more times the original length of the sheet" (Binda at col. 2, lines 10-11). Thus, the re-stretching step of Binda is designed only to compensate the shrinking that takes place during the processing that follows the first stretching step of Binda. As stated in Binda, the maximum shrinking envisioned is a return to "its original unstretched length" (Binda at col. 2, line 40). Accordingly, the stretch ratio of the re-stretching step of Binda cannot be higher than the stretch ratio of the initial stretching step. As a result, the person of ordinary skill in the art would not be motivated by Binda to increase a re-stretching ratio, especially since Binda fails to suggest the significant improvement in optical properties shown in the Examples of the present invention.

Further, as explained in the previous response, Sakamaki is unconcerned about polarization degrees at 440 nm or 610 nm. It is submitted that these optical properties are not inherent in Samasaki, because Samasaki is completely silent as to a manufacturing method as in the present invention, and Sakamaki is also completely silent as to any connection between such parameters and an objective of reducing color irregularity. Further, a person of ordinary skill in the art would have had no motivation to attempt to modify Sakamaki, let alone by referring to Binda. Even if, arguendo, there had been a motivation to modify Samasaki, a person of ordinary

skill in the art would have found no guidance in the cited art on how to improve the optical properties of Samasaki.

In contrast, the present inventors have discovered that setting a ratio of single transmittance to crossed transmittance at wavelengths of 440 nm, 550 nm, and 610 nm, and by crosslinking in at least two crosslinking baths containing a crosslinking agent while stretching the PVA film in respective crosslinking steps, as recited in present claim 13, or by crosslinking in at least one crosslinking bath containing a crosslinking agent while stretching the PVA film in respective crosslinking steps, as recited in present claim 24, and in particular by having a stretch ratio in a second crosslinking step that is higher than the stretch ratio in the first crosslinking step, as recited in claims 13 and 24, it is possible to reduce or avoid color irregularity, as explained and illustrated in the present specification. These features of the presently claimed invention are not taught or suggested in any of Binda or Sakamaki. Therefore, the present claims are not obvious over the cited references taken alone or in any combination.

In view of the above, it is submitted that the rejection should be withdrawn.

In conclusion, the invention as presently claimed is patentable. It is believed that the claims are in allowable condition and a notice to that effect is earnestly requested.

In the event there is, in the Examiner's opinion, any outstanding issue and such issue may be resolved by means of a telephone interview, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned attorney at the telephone number listed below.

In the event this paper is not considered to be timely filed, the Applicants hereby petition for an appropriate extension of the response period. Please charge the fee for such extension and any other fees which may be required to our Deposit Account No. 50-2866.

Respectfully submitted,

WESTERMAN, HATTORI, DANIELS & ADRIAN, LLP

Nicolas E. Seckel
Attorney for Applicants
Reg. No. 44,373

Atty. Docket No. 020585
Customer No.: 38834
1250 Connecticut Avenue NW Suite 700
Washington, D.C. 20036
Tel: (202) 822-1100
Fax: (202) 822-1111
NES:rep